

Cold Ambush

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Summary: This is a sequel to Trip to Insanity. Phineas returns for a second attempt to get revenge on Race.

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> <meta name="Generator"> Disclaimer: HB owns Jonny Quest and all of the Quest characters _

Disclaimer: HB owns Jonny Quest and all of the Quest characters. I am merely borrowing them for my enjoyment and for the enjoyment of others. I mean no harm and am making no money off this.

Note: This is a sequel to Trip to Insanity and takes place approximately two months after the events in that story.

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"Come on, Daddy, let me drive. Please." The pretty redhead pleaded with the tall white haired man walking beside her.

Race Bannon laughed. "Okay, _Ponchita_." He lightly tossed the car keys in her direction. She grinned broadly as she caught them. They climbed into the souped up Mustang. The seat belts automatically came around and buckled around the driver and passenger. With a slight thrill, she put the key in the ignition and cranked the car.

"Now, Jessie, take it easy, okay. Remember the roads are getting icy and this isn't one of those Questworld games you and Jonny are so addicted to."

Jessie Bannon laughed. "Relax Dad. I know the difference between reality and the virtual world." A shiver ran up her spine at that statement. She glanced out the corner of her eye to see if her father had noticed. He hadn't. She turned back to keep her eyes on the road.

Race waited until her attention was focused on her driving before looking over at her in concern. He mentally kicked himself for mentioning Questworld. Jonny hadn't been able to coax her in to a game since the kidnapping. It had been two months since Benton's old partner Phineas Coltaire had kidnapped Jessie and Jonny. His twisted experiment had been designed to drive his daughter insane. For the longest time after the two teens had been rescued, Race hadn't been entirely sure Phineas hadn't partially succeeded. For two straight days, they had kept her under constant supervision. Finally she had firmly told them they were smothering her. Even still, every night since then, Race had slipped into her room after she had fallen asleep and watched over her as she slept. He knew what the others didn't, that Jessie was sleeping with her bedside lamp on and that dreams were still plaguing her even if she wasn't still waking up screaming.

"It feels great having that cast off my arm. If that doctor had said it hadn't healed right this time, I'm afraid I would have had to tell him 'too bad, leave it alone.'"

That was another thing he would one day make Phineas pay for. He had broken her arm trying to restrain her and it had been almost four hours before they could get her to the hospital. Three weeks ago when they had gone back to get the cast off, the doctor had determined that because of that the bones hadn't realigned properly and had re-broken them to reset them.

"I know how you feel, Ponchita. I broke my leg while I was in high school and had to be in a cast for almost three months before it healed right. I thought I was going to cut my leg off trying to scratch that impossible-to-reach itch."

"The first thing I'm going to do when we get home is take a nice long hot shower. I've hated having to be so careful not to get that cast wet." She glanced in the rearview mirror. "I really wish that bozo would get off my tail. Doesn't he know the roads are getting slick?"

Race turned to look behind them. He frowned in suspicion at the dark van that seemed almost attached to their bumper. He would have given anything at that moment to be in the driver's seat. He was used to handling these situations.

The van suddenly sped up and bumped the mustang solidly on the bumper. Jessie and Race lurched forward but were gently restrained by the seat belts. Race reached over and put a hand on the steering wheel to help keep it steady.

"Floor it, Jess."

Jessie pushed the accelerator all the way down but the van kept up with them. Jessie looked up and saw they were rapidly approaching an ice covered bridge. She knew that if they tried to cross it at this speed they could easily wreck but to slow down now would leave them

at the mercy of the van behind them.

"Keep going, Jess. Try to keep the car in the middle of the bridge but do not hit your brakes." Somehow they miraculously made it across the bridge in one piece but Jessie screamed when she saw an eighteen wheeler parked longways across the road. Race grabbed hold of the steering wheel and stretched his leg over to work the brake.

The mustang squealed as it turned abruptly, almost coming up on two wheels. It kept sliding toward the trailer and stopped just before crashing into it. Jessie sat there breathing hard. Race glanced at her. "You okay, Jess?" Race asked as he threw his seat belt off. The van that had been following them stopped two feet away.

Jessie nodded mutely, stunned by the close call. She shook back to herself when she realized her dad was about to confront by himself the three men who had exited the van. She scrambled out of the car on Race's side and launched herself at the goon closest to her as her dad battled the other two. She twisted around with a roundhouse kick to the stomach but he caught her foot and shoved her to the ground. Before she could scramble up, he picked her up by her coat and threw her toward the car. She landed on the hood with a thud and lay there too stunned to move.

Race cried out in pain. Jessie tried to sit up to go to his aid but was grabbed from behind. She struggled to no avail to break the newcomer's grip. The three original goons converged on Race. Jessie caught a glance of a blackjack in one man's hand.

She called out a warning to her dad but her assailant squeezed her roughly. "Keep quiet, Jessie."

That voice—that voice that had haunted her dreams for so long. She craned her neck to look up. "Phineas Coltaire."

He grinned evilly. "I'm honored that you remember me, dear. I do hope you can forgive me for what happened two months ago. It was nothing personal, mind you. It was your dad I was after. That's why if you cooperate now, you won't be hurt."

Jessie pulled against him harder. "I hate you. Let me go and keep away from my dad."

Phineas laughed. "I can't do that, Jessica. Not until Race Bannon pays for ruining my life."

Jessie brought her foot down hard on Phineas and as he momentarily slacked his grip, pulled free and ran to her father's aid. She tried to pull one guy off. She could see that Race was unconscious and bleeding but still they continued to hit him. Someone struck back clipping her chin with the blackjack. She fell to the ground stunned.

"Tie her to that tree and dump Bannon's body in the ditch. We'll take the car and drop it elsewhere. Nobody should find them anytime soon. Good riddance, Bannon."

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Jonny paced back and forth constantly checking his watch. Benton

glanced up from his newspaper. "What's wrong, son?"

"Race and Jess should have been back by now. Jessie's appointment was at two o'clock."

Benton looked up at the wall clock. It was now almost five. "Relax, Jonny. The doctor may have been running late. Or maybe he decided that Jessie's arm still hadn't healed right. You remember how long that took last time."

Jonny shook his head. "No, Dad. Something's wrong. I can feel it. And look, it's snowing harder. Can't we at least call the doctor and see what time they left?"

Benton sighed. "Okay, Jonny, if it will make you feel better." He rose and crossed the room to the telephone. He quickly dialed a number and waited for someone to answer. "Yes, I'm looking for Roger Bannon. His daughter Jessie had an appointment there this afternoon." He listened for a minute and then frowned. "Okay, thank you then. Goodbye."

He hung up the phone and turned back to Jonny. "They left there two hours ago. But that still doesn't mean anything is wrong. The nurse said they did remove Jessie's cast and that everything looked fine. Maybe they went out to celebrate."

The phone rang and Benton answered. After a couple of minutes of listening he hung up the phone. Concern etched into his features. "That was the Highway Patrol. They found Race's car abandoned about ten miles from here. There was no sign of Jessie or Race. Come on Jonny. Let's go look for them."

"I'll go grab one of the homing tracers. Maybe one of them activated the beacon in their watch."

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Jessie groaned. "Daddy?"

Still no answer. In the rapidly growing dark she could just make out the outline of his body in the snow. A fresh coating of snow was now trying to cover him. A single tear slipped down her cheek and froze before hitting the ground. She was so cold. Her jacket had been heavy enough to protect her from the cold as far as walking between the car and building but no coat was much protection after this long in the dropping temperature. When had she stopped shivering?

A car passed by on the highway. She tried to scream for help but barely managed a squeak. How would she be able to get help?

Her eyes tried to close but she forced herself to open them. She was unbelievably tired but knew that if she went to sleep both she and her dad would die. She wondered how long they had been out there and wished she could see her watch. Her watch! Of course, why hadn't she thought of it earlier? By now surely Dr. Quest and Jonny were looking for them. If she could activate the homing signal they could find them.

She maneuvered her wrists as much as her bonds would let her. After the longest time she finally heard a small beep that meant the homing

signal was broadcasting. She was breathing heavily by now from the exertion.

"Bought time you thought of that, Jess." Jonny shook his head.

"Jonny, you're here. Check on Dad." She closed her eyes for a moment.

When he didn't answer, she opened them again. Jonny wasn't there. He probably hadn't ever been there. It was just her cold, numb brain playing tricks on her. She whimpered. She realized for the first time just how dark it had suddenly gotten. She felt her pulse rate quicken. Though she had told no one, she hadn't been completely comfortable being in the dark since her first encounter with Phineas Coltaire.

"Jess?" Race's voice was very weak.

"Dad, thank God. Hold on, I have my homing signal going. Dr. Quest should be here soon. Just stay awake."

"It's dark. I'm sorry Ponchita. I know how you feelâ€¦"

How did he know? She had been so careful not to show her fears. "Dad?"

No answer, had she only imagined him waking up as well? Or had he slipped back into unconsciousness? Jessie strained against her bonds. If she could activate her watch, maybe she could slip her hands free.

A car stopped on the road and two doors slammed. "Race? Jessie? Can you hear me?"

Jonny, she would know that voice anywhere. But was it real or just a trick? She couldn't take the chance; she had to call out to him. Her voice was barely over a whisper. A beam from a flashlight caught her. She blinked against the glare.

"Jess? My God! Dad?"

She looked at him in distrust. "Are you really here?"

Jonny eyed her in concern before nodding. He quickly cut through the ropes and caught her as she sank to the ground. She held onto him tightly. "My dad."

"I've found him." Benton knelt beside the prone form of his friend. "He's been beaten badly. We need to get him to a hospital fast. How is Jess?"

"She's freezing and a little disoriented, Dad, but I think she's okay."

"I'm okay. Take care of my dad."

"Take her up to the car. The heat is still on. There are a couple of blankets in the trunk. Wrap her up in one and bring the other one back here where we can get Race to the car."

Jonny urged Jessie forward but her limbs were so heavy from cold they didn't want to obey. He swung her up in his arm and carefully climbed back up to the car. He deposited her in the front passenger seat and ran back to the trunk. Grabbing the two blankets, he quickly tucked one around Jessie and turned the heat up all the way.

"I'll be right back, Jess."

With the sudden return of heart to her frozen body, sleep was overcoming her. She let her eyes close. She shook herself. She had to stay awake, had to make sure Race was okay. Several minutes passed before the back door opened and Jonny and Benton eased Race onto the back seat. Jonny climbed in with him, cradling his head in his lap. Benton jumped in the driver's seat and looked at Jessie in concern. He reached over and checked her pulse and, at the same time, her skin temperature.

"Jessie, we'll be at the hospital in just a minute. I want you to stay awake, okay."

"Tired. I just want to sleep." Her eyes started to close but Benton pinched her cheek as he pulled back onto the road.

"I know you are but you have to try. Talk to me. Who did this?"

"Phineas Coltaire. I hate him."

Benton glanced in the rearview mirror in time to see Jonny's eyes darken in anger. "I'm starting to as well, honey."

They pulled into the Emergency Room entrance. Benton told Jonny to stay with Race as he bundled Jessie up in his arms and took off toward the door. Inside, he yelled to the nurses to get a gurney out to his car for Race while he continued with Jessie into an exam room. The nurses and doctors sprang into action and for the next couple of hours worked diligently to get both father and daughter's body temperature raised back to normal.

Finally, they let Jonny and Benton in to see Jessie once she was put in a regular room. She was wrapped almost head to toe in a specially warmed blanket. She was still shaking severely but at least the confusion had left her eyes.

"Hey, Jess. How're ya feeling?"

"Cold. I can't get warm. How's my dad?"

Benton and Jonny exchanged a look. Finally Benton sat on the edge of the bed beside the red headed teen. "Jessie, they took Race straight up to ICU. The last we heard they were warming his blood in an attempt to get his body temperature back up and he was still unconscious."

Jessie started to get up. "I want to see him."

"In the morning, Jess. You need to rest; get your strength back; get warm. Race is strong; he's been through worse. He'll get through this too."

Tears filled her eyes. "But I want toâ€¦"

"Besides Jess, Race would never forgive me if he found out I let you disobey doctor's orders. Okay?"

Finally, Jessie nodded. "Okay. Can you get me another blanket?"

Benton nodded and opened the cabinet next to the bed. He wrapped another blanket around her as she settled back on the bed sleepily. "Better?"

"A little."

He smiled at her. "Okay, Jessie. Jonny is going to stay with you while I go talk to the police chief about what happened. You are going to stay put, aren't you?"

She nodded. "I promise, Dr. Quest."

A nurse came in carrying a thermometer. "Miss Bannon, I need to check your temperature again."

Jessie groaned. "I'd tell you where you could stick that thing, but the problem is you already know."

Jonny stifled a laugh as he and Benton stepped out to give her some privacy. Benton touched his arm. "Jonny, while I'm gone, make sure she stays in bed. She really needs the rest."

"I will, Dad. You can count on me."

The nurse came out. Benton looked at her and waited for her report. She smiled. "Her temp is 98 degrees. Still a little low but well on its way to normal. She's over the worst of it now. Excuse me."

"Of course, thank you."

Jonny stepped back inside. Jessie was half-asleep but still shivering, despite being under two heavy blankets. He grabbed another one from the cabinet and covered her before sliding on the to bed beside her. He pulled her close and began rubbing her arms briskly. She partially opened her eyes.

"Thanks. I just can't get warm. I know that thermometer wielding nurse says my temperature is almost normal butâ€¦"

"You were out there for over two hours. You'll warm up eventually. Go on back to sleep."

"If Daddy had been drivingâ€¦"

"The same thing would have happened if Race had been driving. Phineas had this set up too well. Race wouldn't want you beating yourself up over this."

"That's right, I wouldn't."

Jessie sat up at the sound of her father's voice. He was sitting in a

wheelchair bundled up in blankets like she was. His face was swollen and bruised but he was awake and there. Benton pushed him closer to Jessie's bed. Race squeezed her hand. Benton smiled.

"I was just on my way downstairs when a nurse cornered me and told me Race had woken up but wouldn't settle down until he checked on you. I told them you were both so stubborn they might as well put another bed in here and let the two of you share a room. They agreed."

"They don't even need to bring another bed in here. Jonny, if you don't mind."

Jonny slid off the bed and helped Race up. Race eased into the bed with Jessie and Jonny covered the two up. Jessie cuddled beside him, mindful of his injuries.

"Well, Jonny, it looks like they are in good hands. Let's turn the light out and go home and let them rest. Race, Jessie, we'll be back in the morning."

"Leave the light on for Jessie why don't ya Jonny."

The comment was innocent enough but Jess looked at him strangely. This was the second time he had alluded to the fact she didn't like the dark. How did he know? "Why do you say that, Dad?"

Race looked sheepish for a moment. Jonny laughed. They looked at him strangely. "You two are just alike. Jess thinks she has us fooled, that we don't know she's still having nightmares and is sleeping with the light on. And Race doesn't think anyone knows he's been staying in Jess's room every night to keep an eye on her. Honestly guys, my room is right next door to Jessie's."

Father and daughter looked at each other in silence. Benton motioned for Jonny and the two left the room. "Is that true, Daddy? You've been staying in my room at night?"

"Yeah, Ponchita. I know you don't want us to smother you but I'm worried about you. I feel more secure being able to keep any eye on you."

Jessie sighed. "I'm not a baby, Daddy."

"Don't I know it. You're not as easy to protect anymore, Ponchita. It was easier when the only thing I had to protect you from were imaginary monsters in your closet. But now, I couldn't stop Phineas, not two months ago and not tonight and I hate the way that makes me feel. You mad?"

Jessie shook her head. "No, Dad. I can't be mad at you. Please don't feel bad about what happened. You do your best to protect me but things happen. We can't blame each other when it does."

Race smiled and kissed the top of her head. "My little girl's growing up."

Twenty minutes later a nurse stuck her head in the room to check on the two patients. She had been skeptical when their friend had told them at the desk a second bed would not be needed. The bed was too small for two people to comfortably share. However, both patients

were curled up in the same bed together sound asleep buried under three or four layers of blankets. She glanced down at the thermometer in her hand and smiled. She didn't have the heart to wake them. Turning out the light she quietly exited the room.

THE END

Any feedback or comments?

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file.